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## **The Cooper Housing Institute Funds National Study on Housing Choice Vouchers**

*The RAND Corporation and the Turner Center for Housing Innovation  
Will Examine Practices to Improve Implementation of a \$27 Billion Housing Program*

**IRVINE, CA (November 15, 2023)** – Today, the [Cooper Housing Institute \(CHI\)](#), a private research foundation dedicated to solving the affordable housing crisis in the U.S., awarded a grant to the nonprofit, nonpartisan [RAND Corporation](#) (RAND) to fund research into the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The goal of the \$400K study, which will be conducted in collaboration with the [Turner Center for Housing Innovation at UC Berkeley](#), is to identify best practices of housing authorities that are involved in the allocation of HCVs, with a goal of achieving higher voucher utilization rates (the share of issued vouchers that are successfully used to lease housing).

The study will aim to identify actionable steps public housing authorities (PHAs) can take that could lead to improvements in the efficacy and efficiency of this vital affordable housing program.

With an annual budget of \$27B, the HCV program, also often referred to as Section 8, helps more than 5 million low-income Americans afford safe and decent housing in the private retail market. The demand for HCVs far outstrips supply, with only one in four of eligible households receiving a voucher. Despite this demand, many communities across the country are experiencing declining landlord participation due to administrative and structural hurdles associated with the HCV program. These challenges have resulted in vouchers going unused in many high housing cost-burdened markets. The study aims to identify policy and operational choices within PHA control that could loosen these hurdles and increase voucher utilization.

“It’s been more than 20 years since any similar study has looked at voucher utilization on a national scale,” said Jason M. Ward, PhD, economist and co-director of the RAND Center on Housing and Homelessness. “The housing market has changed considerably in that time, so this new study should help identify actionable steps local housing authorities can take to improve utilization of scarce voucher resources in today’s challenging housing market.”

The peer-reviewed report is expected to be released in spring 2025 and aims to shed new light on the substantial national variation in voucher utilization rates across the country.

“The housing choice voucher program is a private-public partnership that helps our nation’s low-income families, seniors and veterans afford a safe, decent place to live,” said Will Cooper, Jr., president and co-founder of the Cooper Housing Institute. “It is among the most flexible federal housing programs available, and a proven tool to reduce homelessness. With this study, we hope to build on these successes by achieving even greater voucher utilization.”

The team leading the study at RAND includes Ward and Heather Schwartz, a senior policy researcher. From the Turner Center are Ryan Finnigan, PhD, associate research director, and Christina Economy, PhD, research associate.

**About Cooper Housing Institute**

The Cooper Housing Institute (CHI) is a private foundation that supports innovative research, public awareness initiatives and community organizations with the sole objective of ending the housing affordability and homelessness crises in the United States. CHI was founded by the Cooper family, owners of WNC & Associates, Inc., a national leader in affordable rental housing investment and development. To learn more, visit: <https://cooperhousinginstitute.org/>.

**About the RAND Corporation**

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous.

**About Turner Center for Housing Innovation**

The Turner Center formulates bold strategies to house families from all walks of life in vibrant, sustainable, and affordable homes and communities. Our focus is on generating constructive, practical strategies for public policy makers and innovative tools for private sector partners to achieve better results for families and communities. For more information visit:

[www.turnercenter.berkeley.edu](http://www.turnercenter.berkeley.edu)

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